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ABSTRACT

This paper compares community college faculty salaries in Florida and the nation, discusses the effects of unions on salaries, and addresses reasons for faculty continuing in education despite lower pay. Community college faculty salaries have increased an average of 51% throughout the United States in the last decade, with some states being as high as 60%. Institutions that used rank designations did not show significantly higher salaries than those that did not, which was also true for unionized institutions--those that were unionized were not significantly higher in salaries than those that were not. Salary levels tended to be more closely related to faculty experience, skill level, and geographic location. Even with significantly greater teaching, student contact, and committee demands than those at a four-year university, community college faculty tend to remain where they are. Research indicates that as long as faculty members are treated with respect, granted contracts and rewards based on performance and experience, included in decision-making, and paid within range of other community colleges, they will stay because they enjoy the student contact and the more "family-like" environment of a community college. (CB)

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FACULTY SALARIES IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of faculty salaries and compensation is an ever intriguing problem. Salaries for community college faculty tend to be lower than that of their university counterparts (eg. UCF $42,000 and Community Colleges $36,000), differ within state boundaries, and vary greatly nationwide. This paper shall attempt to compare salaries of community college faculty in Florida and the nation, discuss the effects of unions and collective bargaining on wages, address reasons for faculty continuing in education even when the pay may not seem exceptional, and propose solutions to salary problems facing community colleges.

SALARY INCREASES

According to Patricia Brown's findings, over a ten-year period from 1982 to 1992, faculty salaries have increased some 50%. The two-year public average was $24,238 in 1982 and by 1992, the average was $38,959. This increase may be the result of inflation, increased cost of living, or the seniority of faculty increasing over time. Nevertheless, salaries have increased. When comparing states against each other (1985 to 1995), a study, published in Illinois looking at faculty and civil service salaries, found that six states saw an increase in faculty salaries of over 60%. All of these states are located in the Midwest and the New England area. Florida had a 58% increased with the national average being 51%. Texas only had a 26% increase. This information might lead one to the conclusion that states where unions are traditionally found

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have better faculty support in terms of salary compensation. This concern will be addressed later. The use of rank was also looked at as a predictor of average salary.

RANK AND UNIONS

In a study by the Illinois Community College System's Fall 1993 Salary Survey Report, a comparison of colleges using rank tended to have no more average salaries above the state average than colleges without rank designations. According to the 1995 Florida Fact Book and the Per Capita Internet Salary Site, three (Brevard, Hillsborough, and Indian River) of seven Central Florida colleges use rank and of those only one is above the state average (Indian River). In state by state comparisons (Brown), the use of rank did not significantly lead to increases in the average salary of community college faculty. The average salary of institutions that did not use rank was $38,400 compared to $38,959 for faculty at colleges that issued rank. No correlation between unionization and the use of rank was noted.

The literature reviews and research of Carolyn Wiley (1993) seem to indicate that unions and collective bargaining had no significant long term impact on faculty salaries. Over a span of 20 years (1974 - 1993), several researchers looked at the this issue and found that faculty salaries tended to be better predicted by "faculty experience, faculty skill level, and geographic location (55)" than unionization. The unionized faculty did experience higher salary levels, but not at statistically significant levels. The faculty at the university level tended to experience more significant pay increases if they were unionized (Wiley citing Birnbaum, Morgan and Kearney, 1977). The reasons for community college faculty not experiencing a significant increase due to union involvement centered around a few points.

Unionization of college faculty has tended to cause a limited surge in pay that lasts only a few years during collective bargaining. According to Leslie and Hu (cited by Wiley), the salary differential between unionized and nonunionized institutions decreased from $681 to $1 per year (1974 to 1975). Follow up studies had similar results. The unions tended to cause an initial increase in salaries, but over time the increases were not significantly greater than at other colleges. Faculty made slightly more at unionized colleges, but the increases aren't that different. In the state of Florida, $36,671 is the average among all community colleges (unionized and nonunionized), Valencia (non) $36,944, Brevard (union) $33,390, Seminole (non) $34,677, Indian River $42,797, Hillsborough $35,329, Miami-Dade $40,570, Broward $38, 387, and Tallahassee had the highest with $45,369. The Florida colleges tended to follow the same pattern as described nationally. Geographic location, faculty skills, and experience are better predictors of salary than union status.

JOB SATISFACTION

Often a question is asked about how community colleges are able to keep competent, enthusiastic, and loyal teaching faculty. How is it possible for someone with a Doctorate to want to teach five or six classes each semester, serve on multiple committees, advise students (formally and informally), sponsor clubs, hold ten to fifteen office hours per week and never reach $60,000 per year (Valencia Salary Schedule)? With the possibility of this person teaching fewer classes, serving on fewer committees, not sponsoring clubs, holding less than ten office hours per week, and still averaging $59,000 per year as a full professor, what keeps this her or him at the community college?

Community college faculty have various reasons for maintaining loyalty and pride in their community college. According to the ERIC report on Job Satisfaction, there are several key explanations for this phenomenon. The incentives for continuing to teach at the community college when other options are available include: an family atmosphere on campus, faculty participation on critical committees and teams, faculty input on policy issues, support from the administration for academic freedom and creativity in teaching, the opportunity to interact with students on a person level, receiving praise for excellence and accomplishments, funds set aside for faculty development and training activities, and stipends or other monetary rewards for excellence and involvement in the college within and beyond the classroom. If these items are present in the college structure, then faculty will remain loyal to the institution unless the salary is not within a faculty memberþs comfort zone. Other reasons to leave institutions that actively support faculty include: lack of professional growth options, a new academic or professional interest, and an assortment of personal situations(eg. illness, maternity, relocation, etc.)

CONCLUSION

After looking at the responsibilities of the community college faculty member, the salary compensation, and the rewards of teaching, one should gather that faculty at the community college are not in it for the money, but for the teaching and learning. The lack of a unionized faculty does not hinder academic freedom to a large degree. The presence of a unionized faculty does not create major conflicts between the faculty and the administration. The hiring of teachers and not only content experts promotes an atmosphere where most feel apart of a great team with common goals and values. These common goals and values give the faculty and administration a reason to keep a positive and open dialogue going that promotes faculty interests with respect for

policy positions. As long as the faculty members are treated with respect, granted contracts and rewards based on performance and experience, and know that the administration wants to keep the best and brightest at a reasonable salary, then faculty members will stay. The solution to the salary problem, in my opinion, requires the college to keep the faculty satisfied with their job and duties, reward excellence, and keep salaries in line with national and regional competitors, both public, private, and corporate.

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